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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the issue of substantive redesign of teacher education programs in order to create a curriculum of integrity which would bring together the many threads of preservice experience. Ohio's University of Dayton's teacher education program is outlined in this paper, and several aspects of the program are discussed in detail. The University's program is thematic--one theme for general education and one for teacher education. The program stresses the process of presenting the prerequisite skills and dispositions for professional, reflective decision-making. In this process, the teacher is portrayed as decision-maker rather than decision implementer. Another area of concern for preservice teachers lies in the tension existing in a pluralistic and diverse democracy. The University of Dayton places a high value on the worth and dignity of individuals and since this belief undergirds the education program, students learn to grapple with diversity and pluralism from the perspective of human dignity. Another process element in the Dayton theme is the portfolio, a mechanism used by students to think through the connectedness of ideas. Students engage in activities and construct meaning based upon their own emerging understanding of the personal and professional dimensions of teaching in order to develop schemata and materials consistent with institutional themes. (LL)

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PORTFOLIOS AND THE PROCESS OF TEACHER EDUCATION

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Portfolios and the Process of Teacher Education

Creating a curriculum that brings together the many threads of the preservice experience is difficult for those involved as students or faculty in teacher education. The segmented nature of most teacher education curricula (see Lasley and Payne, in press) makes it difficult for students to see how the ideas proffered in teacher education can be woven together to create a whole experience, one that they can then translate for their students into meaningful classroom activities and conceptual understandings. Many answers to the question of how to create a meaningful curricular experience have been offered by commission reports and teacher educators. Some argue for eliminating teacher education (Cheney, 1987); some suggest a need for alternative certification (the New Jersey plan); some design fifth year programs that build on a liberal arts degree (the Holmes Group); others restructure existing programs within a traditional four year program (see Lasley, 1991); and, finally, some hope that they can continue business as usual, with no changes made or anticipated in their programs - - these are the head-in-the-sand institutions.

Our point is that in an effort to create a curriculum of integrity, institutions attempt many forms of redesign. Regrettably, redesign efforts are often more structural than substantive. Substantive change necessitates a modification

in the process of teacher education, a revision of what actually happens during the preservice experience. Such substantive changes are in many cases more difficult than structural ones because they require a different type of personal commitment and professional collaboration. Substantive changes necessitate an investment of faculty in the process of teacher education over a long period of time.

Substantive changes imply the creation of a high consensus culture, one in which all faculty share in the goals and purposes of a program. Kagan (1991) describes low and high consensus cultures in teacher education and the implications for preservice practice. One obvious way of engendering a high consensus culture is through thematic programs. Themes have the potential for helping "students develop schema for teaching that are complete, well-organized, and stable" (Barnes, 1987, p. 15). The emphasis by Barnes is on the teacher education student - - enabling preservice teachers to more meaningfully put together pieces of the complex array of concepts they learn. Themes are important not because NCATE requires them or a dean has a visceral need for them; rather, they are important because they foster within prospective teachers a better sense of the inter-relationships of ideas.

FACETS OF A THEME

The University of Dayton has two themes for its teacher education program, one for general education (Pluralism and Human Values) and one for teacher education (Teacher as Decision Maker in a Pluralistic Society). The themes conceptually complement one another and provide the potential grounding for a more substantive curricular framework.

The vision of a highly reflective teacher functioning in a pluralistic democracy can be seen either as the substance of what a program is all about (hence illuminating activities) or as a slogan which conjures up warm fuzzy feelings but has nothing to do with course activities (hence "blinding" to anything but what is). In the process of adopting its themes, there was enough faculty consensus on the priority of reflectivity and pluralism that these values readily became critical components of an institutional vision; the teacher education theme, in particular, captured the essence of the shared values, or vision, of the members of the department.

This particular theme also reflects the critical role of foundations and foundational issues in the process of developing professional teachers. This is not to imply that the issues implicit in the theme are the exclusive or even primary "property" of foundations courses. It is to say, however, that one cannot implement a theme without dealing with foundational issues in substantive and sustained ways throughout the program. Courses within a high consensus

curriculum (Lasley, 1991) complement rather than compete with other courses; only then is a "program" possible.

A theme, then, can be the vehicle connecting purposes and priorities through processes with the players of education. As various elements of the theme permeate a curriculum, students have something to use as they seek to discover or create the interrelations which make sense of their experiences and understandings. If the curriculum has coherence as well as high consensus, the particulars and procedures of the implications of the thematic elements will be the focus of other courses.

"Teacher as Reflective Decision Maker in a Pluralistic Democracy" implies a highly personalistic and morally ladened program. The adjectives "reflective and pluralistic" embody certain values and entail certain programmatic elements. Before any theme can become a vehicle, however, its implicit values need to be transformed into valuing activities. For example, if the "making of meaning" through personal and professional inquiry, introspection, reflection, and interaction is a department's vision and value, then the passive assimilation and absorption of the ideas of others is its worst nightmare. Likewise, an examination of the principles, prerequisites, and attitudes of a pluralistic democracy casting participants in roles of valuers and visionaries might prevent the theme from becoming reified empty rhetoric. In either case, such valuing activities

require substantive personal commitment and professional collaboration extending over time and throughout the program.

REFLECTIVE DECISION MAKERS: A FOCUS

Viewing teachers as reflective professionals who engage in inquiry about teaching focuses on the personal work of individuals (reflection) in relationship with the communal, cooperative, and collaborative character of their community. The interactive nature of professional decisions, actions, and consequences needs to be portrayed. Since too many teachers see themselves as decision implementers rather than decision makers, different types of decision making need to be analyzed:

- Resistent: absolute refusal to decide; must be forced to make decisions.
- Reflexive: non-cognitive continuity; knee-jerk notion that THE answer is already known, and that THE answer is basically the same for any question.
- Reactive: cognitive continuity; goes with the flow until crisis then forces a decision.
- Receptive: anyon else decides; whatever that person says is ok.

  Regulatory: some external authority always has the answer; looks for existing rules and procedures to answer problems.

- Rational: Absolute logical coherence; builds logically coherent world and ignores irrational realities.

Reflective inquiry is both a goal and a process. In the circularity of values and vision, this type of decision making reflects an identifiable moral ethical base by reflecting a particular mindset and mental process. Such inquiry takes students beyond intellectual ownership of decisions to personal and ethical ownership derived from praxis and acquired through communal, cooperative and collaborative activity. Furthermore, a longer term goal would be to encourage a critical competence which would unveil social conditions of schooling whereby curriculum and instruction are influenced by power, authority, and socio-economic factors.

Encouraging preservice teachers to see that "the situations of practice are not problems to be solved, but problematic situations characterized by uncertainty, disorder, and indeterminacy" (Schon, 1983, p. 15-16) is hazardous duty at best. Most preservice teachers would like the teacher education program to predict most decision-making situations ahead of time and give them the "right" decisions. Reflective decision making can bring some order to this apparent chaos by developing the prerequisite skills and dispositions for professional decision-making in problematic situations.

PLURALISTIC DEMOCRACY: A CAVEAT

Implicit within a pluralistic democracy is the tension between the one and the many - - the quest toward unity within and through diversity. The One must be empowered without becoming all-powerful; likewise, the Many must be restrained from infinite fragmentation which destroys any organic, dynamic unity. The premise of the theme is that the classroom is both a microcosm of and preparation for society - - democratic ideals are not only taught but must be caught. Hence, the structure and organization of classrooms and schools should practice a version of as well as preach a vision of a unifying diversity.

American society has not marched steadfastly toward a pluralistic culture, rather, it has stumbled over or onto it. America's cultural diversity has come more by default than by design; our heterogeneity has come through immigrants seeking out a land rather than a culture lauding diversity. Because pluralism has many facets but few clear meanings, clarity will come first by revealing the tangle of roots and how they have become embedded in and intertwined with school practices. The theme implies both a known destination and a journey marked by hazards, detours, and roadblocks.

The first tangle is that to some persons pluralism necessarily means greater personal freedom. "The greater the diversity and cohesiveness of groups in a society, the smaller the diversity and personal autonomy of individuals in that

society. Group diversity, in short, is antagonistic to individual diversity and autonomy" (Patterson, 1975, p. 11). The fallacy that personal freedom necessarily flows from increased pluralism is not readily accepted in some circles. Students have to learn to wrestle with the potential of conflicting "goods." The relative merits of group gain vs. individual loss or the tension between tolerance and the quest for common values should be continually debated in teacher education courses.

Yet another tangle is that pluralism and diversity aren't identical; while pluralism requires diversity, diversity doesn't automatically lead to pluralism. For some, diversity is a deficiency to be eliminated (assimilation or amalgamation); others see diversity leading to individual freedom but not necessarily group identity. Since the University of Dayton places a high value on the worth and dignity of each individual and since this belief undergirds the teacher education program, students learn to grapple with diversity and pluralism from the perspective of human dignity.

So, as students interact with the components of the theme throughout their program, they will be led to critically examine various attempts to deal with diversity and pluralism. The strategy of assimilation, with its motive of shame for cultural deficiencies and its imperialism of Anglo conformity, is analyzed by students. Likewise, attempts toward amalgamation, with its homogenized, melting pot metaphor must

be critiqued in courses. Questions will be explored regarding whether diversity is a good to be encouraged regardless of ethnic cultural identities; or whether personal diversity can be achieved without divisiveness and discrimination; or whether one group's gains in freedom and power to retain and enhance its identity necessarily comes at the expenses of the freedom and power of other groups?

Once again, the theme encourages students to address the question Counts (1932) asked over 50 years ago: "Dare the schools build a new social order?".

THEME ENHANCEMENT: THE PORTFOLIO

A major goal of the theme is to stimulate the imagination not only to lay hold of possibilities, but then to promote certain dispositions. John Dewey, in his little book A Common Faith stated: ". . . it (the ideal) emerges when the imagination idealizes existence by laying hold of the possibilities offered to thought and action. The aims and ideals that move us are generated through imagination. But they are not made out of imaginary stuff. They are made out of the hard stuff of the world of physical and social experience. The new vision does not arise out of nothing, but emerges through seeing in terms of possibilities, that is, of imagination, old things in new relations serving a new end and which the new end aids in creating" (Dewey, 1934, p. 48-49).

What is needed, then, is a dynamic element to guard against conceptual purity clothed in behavioral apathy. The values of reflectivity, openness and diversity need to be revealed throughout the program, embraced by all participants, idealized through possibilities, and energized by imagination. To accomplish such goals is difficult without a process that challenges students to think through ideas in meaningful ways. One method for achieving the goal of integratedness is the portfolio. The portfolio is a process mechanism used by students to think through the connectedness of ideas. Portfolios are not intended for use in assessing low level computational or reading skills of students. Rather, in the ideal, they are efficacious in examining how students put together more complex, higher order ideas (see Forrest, 1990).

Portfolios at the three institutions involved in the consortium take different forms. Although the themes for the other two institutions have not been discussed in detail (as occurred within University of Dayton's), the structure of their portfolios will be described below.

The Wright State portfolio process is relatively formative in nature; the theme of their program is "Teacher as Problem Solver and Developing Professional." Students are expected to aggregate a number of papers that reflect the requirements of the faculty and to produce a document that has a certain practical as well as intellectual appeal to enable them to emerge as professionals. The practical dimension

focuses on using the portfolio as a tool for use in interviews with prospective employers to demonstrate what types of experiences they have had in their preservice preparation. Students are also expected to use the portfolio as a vehicle for self-assessment, specifically understanding their personal strengths and weaknesses. The rationale for the portfolio assignment provided for students suggests the technical focus as evidenced by the language of accountability and professional competence (accountability).

> As a future educator you will be asked to demonstrate your talents and skills first, in searching for a teaching position, and then as a year-end evaluation once you have been hired. The portfolio has become a valuable tool for the interviewing of prospective teachers. Administrators have indicated positively that the evidence presented is an important factor in final employment decision. Seasonal teachers believe a self-organized, year-end portfolio gives them a more professional portrait of their academic year as compared with an administrator's written evaluation based on one or two observations in their classroom. Likewise, feedback from pre-service students indicate overwhelming support for the portfolio. Finally, portfolios can document our own professional self-concept and self accountability (from Wright State University paper, p.1.)

The Central State portfolios are more <u>informal</u> in structure. Central State emphasizes portfolio parties where students share experiences and identify personal and professional goals. Students learn how to build a sense of professional community and how to create a measure of personal investment. The portfolio work is emphasized in an entry educational foundations course. Activities for the students

include extended discussions of five categories of professional knowledge (professional responsibility, command of subject matter, content specific pedagogy, classroom organization and management, and student specific pedagogy). Students also engage in small group discussion work and research on the categories. Finally, the University conducts a Portfolio Party that promotes among students a spirit of inquiry and an opportunity for sharing.

The University of Dayton portfolios are more Constructionist; the institution's theme, as discussed earlier is "Teacher as Decision Maker in a Pluralistic Society." Portfolios include a wide array of materials that students determine make sense for them. They do not attempt to create a formal portfolio document, rather they engage in activities and construct meaning based on their own emerging understanding of the personal and professional dimensions of teaching. Beginning teacher education students are told that portfolios are used to assess their progress toward becoming a decision maker. They are also told that the portfolios will be used as a text in the capstone educational philosophy course. Students are forced to look at the nature of knowledge and at the conceptual interrelationships that naturally occur in teaching and learning. For example, one student wrote a paper for an English course on metaphors used by Martin Luther King "in his" "I have a dream " speech. She noticed that her paper could logically fit into at least two

categories: command of subject matter and professional responsibility (as related to a teacher's work with diverse ethnic and racial groups). The portfolio process at the University of Dayton consists, to a certain extent, of the interplay between students and faculty as students make decisions about their materials. Developing an "end-product" is not emphasized or necessarily encouraged.

The three models described above are not "pure" in design or mutually exclusive types. Instead they represent a general disposition of each institution in terms of broader expectations regarding what can or should occur in the portfolio development process. The portfolios are also beginning to develop a character that is reflective of broader institutional themes. This may be the most important aspect of the endeavor - - the ability of the portfolios to help students develop schema consistent with institutional themes. The differences are a source of strength and demonstrate the multi-dimensional nature of portfolio development, which is not a prescriptive procedure but rather an intellectual process that's guided in part by an institution's theme, in part by the faculty's biases regarding outcomes, and in part by each student's own sense of intellectual pursuit.

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